

Iowa Great Lakes Watershed Assessment

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The Natural Lakes Investigations Team is leading up an effort to complete an assessment of the Iowa Great Lakes Watershed (Spirit, East and West Okoboji, Upper Gar, Minnewashta, and Lower Gar Lakes). This assessment will provide a basis for securing funds for future watershed improvements and a foundation for future watershed coordination work. The project objectives are to provide Geographic Information System (GIS) support to the Iowa Great Lakes Watershed Project, identify and consolidate existing data and other information relevant to the management of the Iowa Great Lakes watershed, and identify any existing data gaps. We will also use watershed models to assess pre and post watershed conditions and measure project success and prioritize watershed treatments. We will inventory and analyze a variety of land-use and environmental data and incorporate these data into the Iowa Great Lakes Watershed Project. Examples include conservation practices such as filter strips and terraces, point source pollution contributors, political and parcel boundaries, etc. This information will be provided to project coordinators to assist them in managing and prioritizing activities.

So far, land-use and conservation practices in the watershed have been inventoried, contacts have been made with lake organizations, local, state and federal agencies, and entities conducting research in the watershed. Data from these entities are being examined to determine project usefulness and future needs. Many data gaps have been identified and plans are being made to prioritize and address these gaps. Initial modeling efforts have allowed us to begin prioritizing potential land treatments and wetland placement. A similar effort is now being considered for Silver Lake in Dickinson County.